

Nadler: House Passes FAA Reauthorization Bill

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WASHINGTON, D.C. — Congressman Jerrold Nadler (NY-08), the highest ranking member from New York to serve on the Transportation Committee today hailed the passage of H.R. 2881, the Federal Aviation Administration Reauthorization Act of 2007. Adopted on a vote of 267 to 151, the bill provides consumer protections for airline passengers, modernizes infrastructure, improves safety, and reduces delays for people and commerce.

“Sadly, for too many air travelers, delays are becoming common,” said Rep. Nadler. “Worst still, some passengers and crews are stuck for hours in unbearable conditions, such as cabins that get as hot as 100 degrees. Today, we have taken steps not only to reduce delays, but to address the issue of these unacceptable conditions. Also, we have started to lay the foundation to deal with cabin air quality by forcing the FAA to once and for all document passenger and crew exposure to neurotoxins from engine oil.”

Included in the bill are two provisions sponsored by Rep Nadler: an FAA study on the possible need for temperature standards to protect crew members and passengers from excessive heat on board aircraft and an FAA study of cabin air quality. Also included in the bill is language applying OSHA standards on board aircraft — a provision long supported by Congressman Nadler.

Earlier today, Congressman Nadler addressed these issues in a speech on the House floor. His prepared remarks are as follows:

“Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of HR 2881, the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2007. This bill includes a number of important provisions, such as modernizing Air Traffic Control systems, ensuring appropriate staffing levels, and applying OSHA standards on board aircraft. But I would like to thank Chairman Oberstar and Subcommittee Chairman Costello for supporting two provisions that are very important to me, and for including them in the Manager’s Amendment that will be offered later today.

“The first provision requires the FAA to conduct a study to determine if temperature standards are necessary to protect crew members and passengers from excessive heat on board aircraft. We have all heard the news reports about passengers stuck on planes, grounded for hours, sometimes in the heat without fresh air and necessary supplies. The Association of Flight Attendants reports that many crewmembers have had to work in dangerously high temperatures during ground operations, sometimes for long periods of time and with no ability to obtain relief. This is not just a matter of discomfort. According to the Department of Health and Human Services, heat related illness can be severe, and can even lead to death, particularly for sensitive populations such as the elderly. Nobody should be trapped on an airplane and forced to suffer such conditions with no ability to obtain relief. My first inclination was to require that the temperature in the aircraft cabin cannot exceed 80°F during ground operations, but because of various operational issues it seems that such a requirement would be premature. I hope that this study will inform Congress of what options might be available to us, and that it will force the FAA to take seriously this common sense consumer protection.

“The second provision would force the FAA to complete a study of cabin air quality that we included in the last FAA Reauthorization bill passed in 2003. Aircraft in the current commercial fleet are equipped with an air supply system that bleed air off the engines, and are prone to air supply contamination with engine oil and hydraulic fluids. We continue to hear reports from crewmembers and passengers who have developed long-term neurological problems after documented exposure to oil smoke in the cabin or flight deck. For several years, Congress has attempted to deal with this issue, and in the last reauthorization bill we included a study to sample and analyze air onboard the cabin aircraft. Unfortunately, this work was never completed.

“My preference would be to set standards for cabin air quality, or require that aircraft use certain filters that can

clean the outside air more efficiently, but every time we raise the issue, we hear that the problem has not been properly documented. It is time for the FAA to once and for all complete this research.

“I would like to thank Mr. Oberstar and Mr. Costello for their support of these provisions and for including them in the Manager’s Amendment that will be offered later today. I look forward to working with my colleagues to advance these critical workplace and consumer protections.”

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